

Comparative Study of Geographical and Occupational Mobility of
Italians Active in the Constrution Industry in
Rome, Italy and in Detroit, Michigan

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July, 1972

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Introduction

This particular stage of the research fits in a series of larger contexts: it followed a questionnaire sent to Detroit building trade union locals, trying to identify the location (in space, time and specialty) of construction workers belonging to an identifiable ethnic group, and the analysis of a series of interviews with people active at some time of their life in construction, part of the 1970 Detroit Area Study (access to the interviews was kindly made possible by Professor Robert Cole, and Ms. Andrea Foote is now providing more general information on the DAS sample and their work histories).

Statistical and bibliographic material on the construction industry and the building trades was also gathered, as well as the opinions and suggestions of a number of people in Detroit, with the aim to develop a research plan dealing with the construction industry, its dynamics and development, and its role in the process of change; the study in Detroit is parallel to the one made in Rome, and specific sociological hypotheses are tested in both areas.

The Rome study utilized data on construction workers (random sample from 1969 Cassa Edile books - Building Social Security) to describe their situation in terms of background (mostly rural) and socio-economic integration into urban life through their work (mostly scarce); general data on the construction industry indicated economic reasons for the difference between findings of the late 60's and the results of a Study done in Milan earlier in the decade that confirmed the "two-step flow" hypothesis presented by Paolo Ammassari, relative to a "stepping stone" role of construction (along with other urban non-manufacturing industries) in the process of sectorial mobility from agriculture into manufacturing. This has been true in Italy during certain stages of its recent development, when the rural-urban migration found construction as an open field of activity for unskilled hands; technological change, economic cycles, demographic trends and other factors (such as unionization) bring about different situations, and a comparison with the United States may help to clarify the influence of each element in the picture.

It may be postulated that the U.S. is more advanced than Italy in terms of industrialization, urbanization, unionization and technology; within limits, the present situation of one country reflects that of the other in a different period. Attempting to find a population in Detroit that could be compared with Italian rural immigrants from the South, the first instance seemed to be offered by Southern migrants from the rural states; however, racial problems (particularly acute in the building trades) and the scarcity of Appalachians in the industry suggested a different approach, namely immigrants from rural Italy, that have entered the field of construction in appreciable numbers through the years, and allow some observation of mobility over time and space.

The final aim of the study is to contribute to a larger research now being done (funds permitting) in Italy, concerned with occupational mobility as part of a more large process of social mobility, within the frame of societal change.

1. Methodology: Description of the Questionnaire

This particular stage of the research fits in a series of larger contexts. However, its results may be observed independently, as examples of immigrants' careers. The first part of the questionnaire inquires about the respondents origins in Italy, in terms of geographic and occupational position; the family's migration history is observed next. Dates and places of immigration and successive occupations of family members who migrated to America represent various steps, often in a process of intergenerational upward mobility (see notes on responses).

The respondent's life history (place and date of birth, places and dates of various jobs, with description of the kind of occupation) comes next; as the investigation was directed to building contractors, the following questions concern his employees - construction workers - who are of Italian origin.

The last part of the questionnaire follows closely the pattern used in a more extensive questionnaire sent to building trades locals, attempting to trace the geographic and occupational mobility of construction workers in the Detroit area. Besides their place of origin, the kinds of jobs done before and after work with the employer are asked (with a specific question about those who became contractors), maps are included to record their places of residence, and the age composition now and in 1960 is outlined.

2. Finding the Respondents: Channels and Sources

Different ways to contact respondents were tried at first, mostly through organizational groups, such as I.S.D.A. (Italian Sons and Daughters of America) and the Cement Contractors Association, whose president is in construction. (Note: most of these contacts were possible thanks to suggestions and addresses given by Mr. and Mrs. Edward Baker, of "La Tribuna del Popolo".)

However, even after sending official request letters and waiting for official meetings where the proposition would be presented to members and discussed, no list of addresses of possible respondents resulted, although some of the officers contacted showed great willingness to help. As the available time was running out, a more direct source was preferred. After looking up a couple of names suggested

by a secretary or treasurer of an association, the telephone directories were systematically scanned in search of Italian names under the headings of Building Contractors, Cement Contractors and such, and a fairly large number were contacted.

3. Contacting the Respondents

The experience of calling a telephone number appearing under an Italian name, identifying myself and asking permission to send the questionnaire - following a routine developed in occasion of the previous questionnaire sent to the unions - proved quite interesting and somewhat varied.

3.1 Obtaining Permission from Offices

In the cases where the construction company had an office and a secretary, it was easy to leave a message, and in most cases permission to send the questionnaire was given without problems by the secretaries. In one case, I was told that the name was actually Armenian, and spared the embarrassment of speaking to a supposed compatriot - only to find out my mistake.

When the head of the company was available in the office to speak to me, my brief explanation was generally sufficient, and permission granted. However, some desired more clear description of the study and its purposes, and one said that he was going to retire and did not want to answer my questionnaire.

3.2 Difficulties and Family Businesses

Refusals, however, were not numerous, and came more often from small contractors. Some husbands called to the phone by their wives, over the voices of the rest of the family, wanted to make sure there was no expense involved - so I had to enclose self-addressed stamped envelopes.

One of the wives decided to give me summary information, and avoid being sent the questionnaire. Another asked in which language it was written, because her husband could not read English. A third one engaged me in a short and pleasant conversation about Italy. I was asked a few times where I am from, and tended to be embarrassed about my Northern origin. However, in the case of the lady we were almost neighbors, and another man was Piemontese - even further north than myself.

4. Respondents' Language and Names: Preservation of Identity

Very few people talked to me Italian, although many had a strong accent when speaking English. Another linguistic curiosity was the spelling and the pronunciation of names, mostly distorted in one way or the other. For example, Mr. Ficarra pronounced his name as the Italian Fichera, which it must have been originally (it is a common family name in Sicily), while my pronunciation of Iafrate had nothing to do with the American secretary's version. In most cases, however, even long and difficult names were left intact in the telephone book. A couple of companies had chosen Italian titles well known and easy to pronounce, or selected some symbol from the home town.

Trusting Nat Glazer's report of Blum's (now Broom?) book on Anglicization of names, I did not expect Italian-Americans to have done a great deal of that; it would be interesting, however, to know if and how many all-Italian companies have chosen titles that do not explicitly indicate their ethnicity.

5. Changes Over Time and Space

As the telephone calls were made from the office of the International Fellows in the Center for Urban Studies, the directory I used was the one available there - 1970 Yellow Pages. This allowed me an unplanned extension of the study of mobility. Quite a few numbers had changed, some of them together with the address, by Spring of 1972. A few stubborn "now answers" turned out to be not existing anymore in the 1971 Yellow Pages - a practical demonstration of the ease of entry and exit in and out of the industry.

In conjunction with an Urban Geography study of the location of establishments through time, I looked up the Italian names among contractors (both General and Concrete) in the classified telephone directories of 1926, 1936, 1945 and 1966, observing changes in numbers and locations. It was interesting to recognize the name of one of my respondents (born in Italy in 1913) already in 1926. Some others could be traced back to some other year.

5.1 City-Suburb Distribution

A first observation of their numbers and addresses shows a few interesting facts. From 13 in 1926, Italian contractors drop in numbers to 6 in 1936, and quintuplicate by 1945, with 29, 7 of whom are outside Detroit (2 in Allen Park, 2 in Dearborn, 1 each in Highland Park, Redford and Center Line). In 1926 the only one out of Detroit was in Grosse Pointe. In 1936 the only one was in Dearborn.

By 1966, there were 57 Italian contractors, and 25 were outside Detroit. In 1971, out of 59 only 23 were in the city, while 36 were in the suburbs (see map).

5.2 East Side - West Side Distribution

The first observation made on the maps concerns the differential distribution on the East and West Sides through time. Total figures for city and suburbs show a fairly equal share (except in 1945), when East Side city residents outweigh West Side city and suburbs), but within the city the East Side dominates until about 1970, and in the suburbs the reverse is true - only in 1971 the advantage of the West Side is minor.

5.3 Ethnic map and Italian Contractors

A comparison with the Detroit area ethnic map of 1971 shows a remarkable consistency between East Side Italian areas and contractor's addresses, but hardly any on the West; the Northwest is supposedly Black and Jewish, although in 1971 Italian contractors are as numerous there as in the traditional East area.

5.4 Socio-Economic Level map and Italian Contractors

Another interesting comparison can be made with the 1960 Socio-Economic levels. On the East Side, Italian contractors appear in areas of "average" level, on the West Side on the "high" ones. In both cases, however, these areas tend to be above the level of the surrounding ones.

5.5 Conclusions about Mobility of Italian Contractors in the Detroit Area

A tentative conclusion may be drawn from this broad and somewhat sketchy picture of the distribution in time and space. From the scatter of the 20's and the scarcity of the 30's, a more consistent pattern emerges after the War. Especially in 1945 and 1966, one may detect two groupings, moving in opposite directions through time, and setting the stage for the 1971 distribution. Today, as already observed, most contractors are located in the suburbs. From the city's East Side, the migration outward has reached the neighboring municipalities, while in the West an already suburban distribution has gone further out.

This consistency in pattern agrees with Dr. Leonard Moss's description of the outward moves of ethnic groups in the Detroit area,

going away from the center and remaining on the side chosen at the start. Apparently, East and West even have some differences in accent and pronunciation.

There are individual examples of mobility: from St. Aubin to Kercheval, to Harvard to Harper, from Traverse to Rogge to Sterling Heights, from East Seven Mile to East Detroit, from Manning to Roseville. There is one cross move - from Beaufait to Southfield (suburb) - but it appears as an exception.

6. Synthesis of Questionnaire Responses

6.1 Family History of Contractors of Italian Origin (from questionnaire responses).
Chronology of Geographic and Occupational Mobility of Family Members and Respondents.

<u>Place of Origin</u>	<u>Work</u>	<u>Immigration to U.S.</u>	<u>Work in U.S.</u>	<u>Relative</u>	<u>R.N.</u>
Central Italy	Farm	1895 in Pennsylvania	Miner	Grandfather	2
Northern Italy	Farm	1900 N.Y. - Montana - California - Detroit	Railroad, miner, machine operator	Father	8
Central Italy	Farm	1902 Pennsylvania - 1912 Detroit	Ford	Father	9
Central-South	Farm	1902 to Detroit 1903 to Detroit	Construction	Grandfather Father & Uncles	12 12
Northern Italy (Liguria)		1905-1920 to Detroit	Restaurant	Grandparents	6
Sicily	Constr. & Farm	1906 to Detroit 1907 to Detroit	R.R., Stove Fac.	Grandfathers Grandmothers	7 7
?	?	1907 to California		Mother	8
Central Italy	Farm	1911 to N.J. and Detroit	Construction	Father	5
Sicily	Herd & Farm	1914 to Detroit	Foundry, Grocery	Father	3
Central Italy	Constr.	1916 in Pennsylvania & Detroit	Factory in Detroit - 3 yrs.	Father	4
Central Italy		1916 to Detroit		Mother, Brother	+9
Central Italy	Farm	1921 to New York	Railroad	Uncle	13
Central Italy	Farm	1925 to New York & Detroit	Construction	Father	13

<u>Place of Origin</u>	<u>Work</u>	<u>Immigration to U.S.</u>	<u>Work in U.S.</u>	<u>Relative</u>	<u>R.N.</u>
?		1925 to Detroit		Mother	4
Central Italy	Farm	1926 to Detroit	Tile contr. (1947-)	Brother	11
Central Italy		1927 to Detroit		Sister	11
Central Italy	Farm	1928 to N.Y.C.	Construction	2nd Uncle	13
Central Italy	Farm	1930's to Detroit		Grandfather	10
Central Italy	Farm	1948 to Detroit	Tile setter & Constr.	Brother	+11
Central Italy	Farm	1951 in Canada & Detroit	Construction	Cousins	13
Central Italy	Mason & Farmer	1953 to Detroit	Bricklayer (10 years)	Father	1
Central Italy		1954 to Detroit	Steel (2 yrs) Contr. (6 yrs)	Self	1
Central Italy		1955 to Detroit	Bricklayer (11 yrs)	Brother	1
Central Italy		1955 to Detroit		Mother	1
Central Italy	Market Broker	1954 to Detroit	Steel mill crane op.	Father	2
Central Italy		1954 to Detroit	Bricklayer, now Contr.	Self	2
Central Italy	Farmers	1964? to Detroit	Family constr. company	Self	10

6.2 Life Histories of Contractors of Italian Origin (from questionnaire responses).

<u>Birth</u>	<u>Work Experience Outside Construction</u>	<u>Start of Work in Construction</u>	<u>Start of Work as Contractor</u>	<u>R.N.</u>
1912	Farming in S. Marino before immigration	1948, age 36	1960, age 48	11
1913	1933 - ? in factory and sales - age 20	?	?	9
1915	1938 - ? Real Estate Broker - age 23	194?	?	5
1916	?		1948, age 32	8
1919	1938-42 clerk and butcher in father's grocery; 1942-44 grocery manager; 1944-1957 grocery owner	1957, age 38, salesman of building products	1958, age 39	3
1931	machining supervisor 5 years, tool maker 7 yrs. - machinist 9 yrs., Ford Motor Company 2 yrs.		Now, age 40	4
1935	1954, age 18, in steel factory (imm)	1956, age 20 (Br1)	1962, age 26	1
1938		1962, age 24, in father's company		13
1940	1963, age 23, supervisor at Ford	1965, age 25, in father's company		13
1942		? in family company		7
1947		1965, age 18 (Br1)	1970, age 23	2
1948		1968, age 20, with brother		6
1950		1964, age 14, in family company		10

7. Analysis of Family Histories

An attempt has been made to present the above data, together with family history and immigration, in two graphic tables, covering 10 out of 13 responses. The graph has time as the vertical scale, and on the horizontal the space is divided in intervals corresponding to possible work experiences, following immigration. The first space is labelled Italy, and indicates the birthplace of respondents who immigrated in the United States. An earlier version of the graph included family work. However, there seems to be no variation through time in that respect, as most respondents come from an agricultural background in Italy.

7.1 Places of Origin: Geographic Distribution

The geographic distribution of the places of origin is heavily weighted toward Central Italy, where 8 out of 13 respondents come from. Five of those are from the depressed province of Frosinone, not far from Rome, and the remaining three are from San Marino or its vicinity. (Note: this tiny "republic" appears to be the source of many construction workers and contractors not only in Detroit but in Windsor, Ontario and Toronto, Ontario as well.)

Two more respondents are from Sicily (both from the Palermo province) and one is from Caserta, which he places near Rome (Central Italy) but is actually nearer Naples, in the South; it may be fairly labelled Center-South, and is in a position fairly similar to that of Frosinone.

The two remaining respondents have their family roots in Northern Italy, in Piemonte and Liguria respectively. This may sound strange, as the Northwestern regions are the most advanced industrially, but their immigration goes back to the beginning of the century, and the places of origin are not the large active cities but minor villages, agricultural or - in the case of Rapallo - fishing and resort. (Note: family activity is not indicated in this particular case, but as they became restaurant owners in Detroit, we may expect them to have been involved with service trades to tourism - Rapallo was fashionable at the turn of the century - rather than fishermen.)

7.2 Kinds of Work in Italy

As noted earlier, the principal kind of work in the place of origin appears to be farming. Italy was indeed a predominantly agricultural country until after World War II, and its Mezzogiorno is still today the source of a rural-to-urban flow of migrants, pushed out of the countryside by the birth rate differential and the improved productivity - with less manpower - of Italian agriculture.

Beside the Rapallo family - whose work we had to guess at - we have two cases of construction and farming given together as occupation. One respondent explicitly indicates "mason and subsistence farmer", a not uncommon combination. Only one gives construction as the family occupation. In another case, herding is mentioned with farming, and one "mediatore", or market broker, is mentioned. This particular trade is obviously a tertiary one strictly tied to agriculture.

8. Immigration Flow

The dates of immigration, shown in chronological order, indicate a flow quite consistent with the historical data on Italian immigration to the U.S. and to Detroit in particular.

8.1 To the United States

Out of about 45 individuals indicated in the chronology, 25 came to the U.S. before 1920; 17 of them before 1910. Immigration to the United States from Italy brought over 23.5 million between 1900 and 1909, and 19.4 million between 1910 and 1919. (Note: Source, quoted in David Ward, "Cities and Immigrants", N.Y. Oxford University Press, 1971, is N. Carpenter, "Immigrants and their Children", U.S. Bureau of the Census Monograph No. 7, Washington, D.C. 1927, pp. 324-325.)

8.2 To Detroit, Michigan

Immigration to Detroit was in nearly 10 cases a second step; 5 of these before 1930. Total immigration to Detroit shows 13 cases before 1910, an additional 7 between 1911 and 1920, and 5 more between 1921 and 1930. Figures on the Italian immigration can be derived with some approximation from data on Detroit's residents by country of last permanent residence, subtracting those of the preceding census year. The resulting balance appears to be 4,819 for 1910; 10,431 for 1920; 12,376 for 1930.

Although such a small sample can only dimly reflect the larger population of building contractors of Italian origin, it is interesting to note that they do not seem to be part of the heaviest stream drawn to Detroit - those who came in the 20's to work for the automobile industry. This calls for a closer observation of their work history in the United States.

9. Occupational Mobility

Moving from an Italian agricultural background, what kind of steps were taken in association with geographical mobility? What

occupations were taken in succession by individuals and families? These vary to a certain extent with technological changes through time. For example, mining is mentioned twice, at the beginning of the century; so is railroad work, with an additional case who immigrated in 1921 and retired in 1969.

9.1 The Early Group: Fathers and Grandfathers

Construction, started by the respondent's father, and sometimes uncles too, appears in 1903, 1911, 1925, 1928. In some cases the family history is incomplete, and we may expect at least two more fathers, probably during the '40's, who became contractors and have now their sons in the business.

Factory work - often specified as steel, seldom as automobile - is mentioned in the case of 5 fathers: one of them for 3 years only, following a stay in Pennsylvania, and a construction background in Italy, to which he may have returned.

There is one grandfather at least working in a stove factory, others are restaurant owners or railroad and mine workers.

9.2 The More Recent Group: Postwar Immigration

The more recent group of immigrants - those who came after the war - often includes the respondents themselves. Excluding a puzzling grandfather, who came to Detroit in the '30's and whose grandson born in Italy in 1950 starts work in 1964 in Detroit, apparently in the family's construction company, we have a dozen individuals, all coming to Detroit (a group of them by way of Canada) and for the great majority working in construction. One father is crane operator in a steel mill, but soon follows his father (a mason and subsistence farmer in San Marino) and after 6 years is contractor.

Bricklaying and tile setting are mentioned, and the trowel trades are known as being rather ethnic - almost exclusively Italian for tile and marble, more Italian now than English and Scottish for bricklaying. (See tables on Ethnicity.)

10. Analysis of Respondents' life histories

A detailed observation of the 13 respondents, attempting to uncover trends in their occupational history, and possibly compare them with the larger Detroit area sample, has to be limited by the somewhat incomplete responses.

10.1 The Older Group (age 40 and over)

For the older group, we have some mixed work experiences before contracting. One immigrates at 36, having probably worked in agriculture, and becomes tile setter until 1960. Another becomes builder at 32 (no indication of previous work), and a third one quits the family grocery to sell building products, and two years later, at 39, becomes contractor. Another starts now as self-employed builder, aged 40, after some 23 years of factory work.

10.2 The Younger Group (age under 40)

Younger respondents - those under 40 - have often joined the family company right out of school, or while in it; a couple have worked two years in factories (steel and Ford respectively), two had some 5-6 years of work as bricklayers before becoming contractors. These different elements combine in various ways to form individual life histories, however, some common strains weave through them, and the lower age of this group at the start of construction work is remarkable. This seems due to the concentration of business starts in the more recent years.

11. "Chain" Migration of Families and Villages

As a conclusion, the aggregate migration pattern of families may be noted - it appears closely as a chain, with wives often following husbands, brothers and cousins joining the one who made the move first.

"Chain" migration patterns often appear in the broader context of villages, with friends as well as relatives following a "first mover" and staying often close to him, in terms of work as well as residence. This explains the Italian pattern of ethnic concentration, with distinct and often separate nuclei that group and keep together individuals and families from the same town or village.

12. Analysis of Questionnaire Data on Employees: Geographic Origin

Questionnaire data on employees may be used to observe the extent of this relation among Italian contractors and their fellow countrymen who are construction workers. Out of 10 respondents who give information on their Italian employees, 8 indicate their geographic origin as being very near, and in 6 cases identical, to their own. This is true even for the second and third generation, Detroit-born contractors. Another respondent gives an imprecise answer, and the remaining one has employees from San Marino - he happens to be from Piemonte.

13. Possible Reasons for Identity in Places of Origin

Two factors may be at work here. As most of the contractors come from the same region, we may expect the bulk of migration to be originated from there, given the socio-economic conditions, as well as a "beaten path" or "chain" migration factor. However, the distinct identification of the single village where workers come from, as the same of the employers, may show that within the broader stream from region to region there are specific lines, where an established employer recruits men from his "old town", to come over and work for him. Somewhat differently, we may think that workers themselves, having decided to migrate, will seek a place where somebody they know (more or less directly) can be of valid help.

14. Historical Not on the "Padroni"

In this context, it is interesting to compare the present situation in the construction industry with the hard days when the "padroni" exploited their countrymen in railroad and construction work - as the often illiterate workers believed to be assisted by a friend, following the village tradition. Later, with successive emancipation of the "new" arrivals, the attitude toward fellow countrymen became more one of assistance, against the unscrupulous figures of former "padroni". Work rules and laws also changed, and unions began to become organized. (Note: For an extensive description and discussion, see "Urbanization, Ethnic Groups, and Social Segmentation", by John S. Macdonald and Leatrice D. Macdonald, in Social Research, 29, No. 4 (Winter, 1962))

15. Synthesis of Questionnaire Data on Employees

No. of employees of Italian Origin Now	Province Region in Italy	Employer's Origin	Kind of Work done in <u>Most</u>	<u>Many</u>	Italy <u>Few</u>	In the U.S.	R.N.
50 Terrassini (PA)	Sicily	Same	Farm	Constr.			7
18 San Marino	Central	Other	Farm				8
5-20 D.K.	Central	Near	Farm		Constr.		9
10 Cassino (Frosinone)	Central	Same	Farm				13
8 San Marino	Central	Near		Constr.	Farm	Factory	2
6 D.K.	--	--	Constr.				5
5 Sora (Frosinone)	Central	Same		Constr.	Farm		10
4 Caserta ? (NA)	Center- South	Same					12
3 San Marino	Central	Same	Constr.		Farm		1
2 San Marino	Central	Same					11

No.	Age	Composition		Work of ex-employees			Contractors	Returned	R.N.
	Most	Many	Few	Constr.	Blue C.	White C.		w/employer	
50	30-50		20-30 over 50	Most	Few	Few	10 (Many)		7
18		30-50+	20-30	Most			Many		8
5-20		30-50	20-30 over 50	Most	Few	Few	3-4 (Few)		9
10	30-50		20-30				Few	Yes	13
8	20-30		30-50	Most			4 (Many)	2	2
6	30-50			Few			None		5
5	30-50		20-30	Most			None		10
4		30-50					1		12
3		30-50	20-30	Most	Few	None	2 (Few)		1
2		20-30		Most			Few		11

16. Comments on Age and Occupational Distribution

As this synthetic presentation of the questionnaire responses indicates, there is a remarkable consistency in the characteristics of Italian construction workers. Their age distribution, with a couple of exceptions, is mainly in the groups over 30, the greatest majority stayed in construction, with some cases of contractors more or less successful; the work done in Italy appears fairly evenly split between Farm and Construction (other choices were left open in the questionnaire), and this appears to be the main difference from the characteristics previously observed for employers.

17. Occupational Mobility Through Construction

17.1 In Italy

Given the wide gap in time between the workers' immigration (mostly quite recent) and that of contractors' families, their work in Italy reflects the changed occupational structure in the country of origin. It has been observed that in certain stages of economic development, construction work is often an occupational bridge for rural-to-urban migrants, as it provides easy access even to unskilled people, and helps them acquire some basic urban skills and experiences that enable them to move up the occupational ladder toward more rewarding industrial jobs.

17.2 In the U.S.

This is clearly not the case in the United States. The construction industry does not offer easy access to the unskilled, but it provides high rewards, and this explains the lack of further mobility of construction workers - very few appear to have taken blue-collar jobs, even fewer moved to white-collar positions.

The relative frequency of starts in contracting indicate, however, an important avenue to mobility within the construction industry. For entrepreneurs, the ease of entry seems remarkably higher than in other fields, as capital requirements are limited, and recurrent booms can easily provide work for everyone.

18. Geographic Distribution of Employees' residences

18.1 Limitations of Responses

Very few respondents indicated on the maps attached to the questionnaire the areas of residence of their employees. Those who did sometimes confused the check mark, to be used for present residences, with the cross that was supposed to indicate the residences

in 1960. In many cases, both marks were put in the same places, indicating stability. Some, however, seemed to follow the Italian habit of checking with a cross, and the maps that summarize responses just reproduce them, without attempting to interpret the time dimension.

18.2 Resulting Pattern

Along the spatial dimension, however, there is a remarkable consistency. The East side seems highly favored, both in the city and the suburbs, and the few indications of West side residences came mostly from employers with offices in those areas (Bayside, West Eight Mile, James Couzens).

18.3 Possible Explanation

It may be hypothesized that areas of ethnic concentration contain the homes of the workers more often than the offices of the employers, because of the geographic separation of different functions and social classes. In the case of construction, this may happen less, as many "offices" are at home and entrepreneurs may have been workers until recently, and even go back to it.

19. Comments by Respondents

To conclude the case study, it may be useful to quote the few comments added by respondents at the end of the questionnaire.

19.1 Concerning Employees and Ways to Contact Workers

One (and possibly many non-respondents) believed that the questionnaire does not apply to him. He hires labor as he needs it, and generally there are all nationalities represented, more often Americans. Indeed, speaking of employees for construction we indicate a far more changing relationship than in most industries. The core of workers stably employed by one firm is usually quite small.

Along the skeptical line, there is a practical suggestion. A man who does not quite understand what the research is trying to find out, says that it seems more helpful to question the individuals working in construction at present. To do this, one can check with unions of various trades and from their membership list select those with Italian names.

Local unions were indeed contacted for the research. Membership lists were never asked, but it is doubtful that contacts with workers, even when possible, would have elicited many complete responses. The

educational level appears quite low, from statistical findings and personal communications, and the language may constitute an additional barrier (possibly, a bi-lingual mini-questionnaire could be devised, if the research is to go further).

19.2 Concerning the Content of the Questionnaire

An unexpectedly expert critic of the sociological investigation stated his surprise for my "non-interest" in the amount of education of anyone. Actually, a graduate student at Wayne who obligingly put me in contact with her relatives said that, besides being income tax season, with all of those forms to fill out, an additional obstacle to circulating my questionnaire among Italian contractors was their being hardly able to sign their name. If this is often the case, additional questions on education would make the whole thing more difficult and embarrassing.

The same critic also writes: "I am curious (sic) to know what the objectives of the survey (sic) are and the results". His first impression would be that there is no correlation between Rome and Detroit. He is an expert.

Another writes: "Sorry I can't help you further but I've just graduated from college and do not have the experience. However I'm interested in how your study turns out, and wish you luck in reaching your goals, I'm sure you'll be satisfied with yourself after all the work your (sic) putting into it." Sounds like an encouragement.

20. Summary and Conclusions

The total picture presented by the responses of 13 contractors of Italian origin has a number of fairly consistent traits. We can assume that they are not at great variance with the reality of the larger population of Italian contractors in the Detroit area.

Geographically, contractors and employees tend to follow the pattern of ethnic concentration, but more markedly on the East than on the West side. Suburbanization has been along the same lines of separation, and appears more widespread among contractors. Employees are mostly in the Harper Woods, East Detroit, Roseville, St. Clair Shores area - assuming that the very few responses are representative.

Historically, the migration of Italian families took place at the beginning of this century, often settling on the East Coast and moving later to Detroit. Railroad, mining, and factory work was taken up by former farmers, coming mostly from Central and Southern Italy.

Construction work was mostly undertaken by respondents' fathers, either as first occupation in America or as a second step - in the individual career or in the generational sequence. The frequency of construction work increases in more recent times, involving respondents and their siblings.

Employees tend to come from the same places as contractors - mostly Central Italy, and especially San Marino. They have often worked in Italy in construction. Their more recent immigration reflects the change in Italian occupational structure after the War.

Both respondents and employees show frequent cases of construction work preceding - and sometimes following - contracting activity. Excluding the youngest respondents, who often enter a family business, the age of contractors is between 30 and 50 at the start. This age class is also frequent among employees.

As the purpose of this study was to compare Detroit with Rome, and in general Italy and the United States, we can make a few observations from these results. First, agricultural background is frequent among Italian construction workers in both countries; but the subsequent occupational mobility is different.

In Italy, construction is an intermediate step toward better jobs, like manufacturing in industrial areas, various services in cities like Rome. In the United States, the structure of the unions and of the industry make construction work a desirable occupation, where it is easy to become a self-employed entrepreneur. In many cases, construction was reached after jobs in manufacturing or services; sometimes, before that, mining and railroad.

The importance of Italians, as an ethnic group, in building trades and among contractors may be seen in a historical and cultural context, sometimes parallel to that of other groups.

Construction work, following agricultural work or even mixed with it, is very common in Italy. Masonry predominates, and many workers are engaged in trowel trades, mostly at the lower skill levels. Especially in the past, construction activity was highly labor intensive, and hardly mechanized or "industrial". Open-air work in the fields. Hence Italians have a tradition and preference for construction work, especially labor and trowel trades.

The early Italian immigrants were engaged in railroad and construction work; gangs were brought over by middlemen, and groups from the same place often came and worked together. The early exploitation by the "padroni" was counteracted by the formation of ethnic labor unions "in semi-skilled and unskilled occupations such as construction laboring, mining, stonecutting, and bricklaying". (Note: John S. and Leatrice D. Macdonald, "Urbanization, Ethnic Groups and Social Segmentation", in Social Research 29 No. 4, 1962)

Serial, or chain migration from the same towns, mutual help among relatives and friends, the early establishment of some Italian contracting firms, and the time of labor and trade union developments, after the great wave of Italian immigration, seem to work together in setting the stage for ethnic dominance in some kinds of construction work. This may change over time, if affluence and increased education of new generations make them prefer white-collar jobs. (Note: One such case, from the East Coast, said that his father was disappointed, because he had never worked for a boss in his life. The son's position in a large corporation seemed to be no better.)

Appendix

Map A - Detroit City - Distribution of Italian Contractors in
1926, 1936, 1945, 1966, and 1971

Map A-1926-36 - Detroit City - Distribution of Italian Contractors

Map A-1945 - Detroit City - Distribution of Italian Contractors

Map A-1966 - Detroit City - Distribution of Italian Contractors

Map A-1971 - Detroit City - Distribution of Italian Contractors

Map B - Detroit Metropolitan Area: Distribution of Italian
Contractors in 1945, 1966, and 1971

Map B-1945 - Detroit Metropolitan Area: Distribution of Italian
Contractors

Map B-1966 - Detroit Metropolitan Area: Distribution of Italian
Contractors

Map B-1971 - Detroit Metropolitan Area: Distribution of Italian
Contractors

Map C - Social-Economic Level of Detroit and Metropolitan Area
in 1960

Map D - Geographic Distribution of Employees' Residences in Detroit
and Metro Area

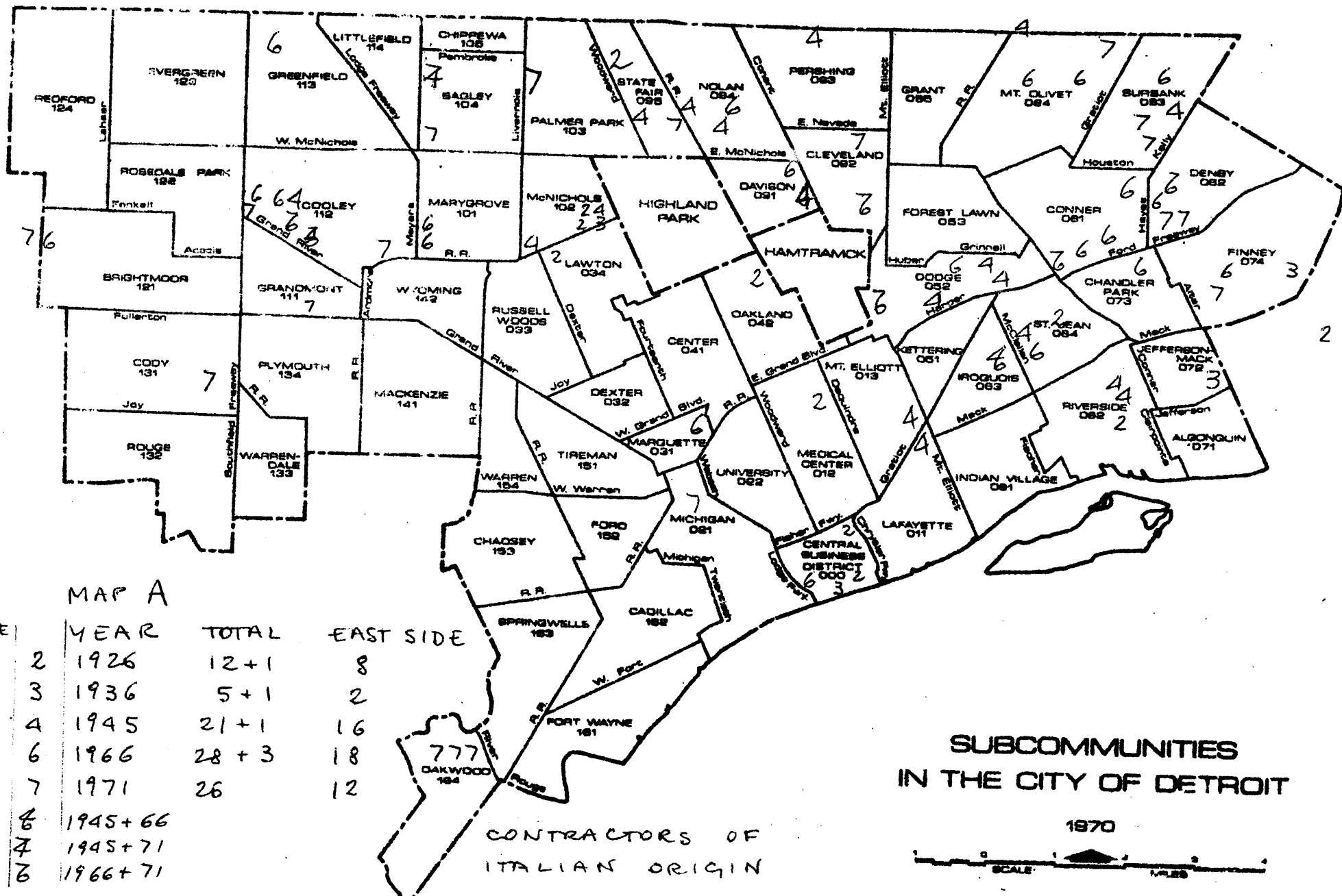
Map E - Geographic Distribution of Employees' Residences in Detroit
and Metro Area

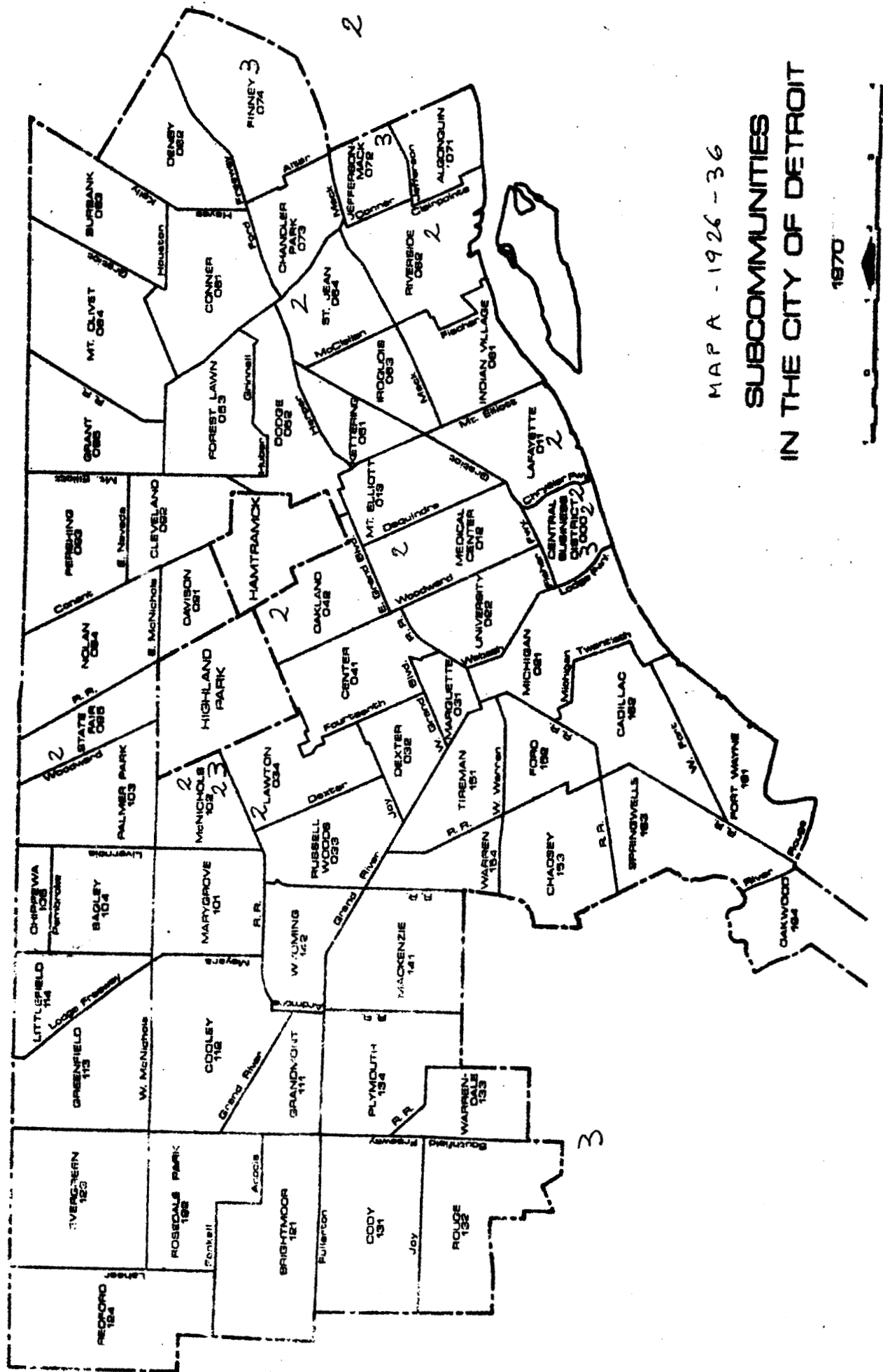
Sample of Addresses of Contractors of Italian Origin
East Side - Suburbs and Detroit

Sample of Addresses of Contractors of Italian Origin
West Side - Suburbs and Detroit

Sample of Questionnaire Sent to Contractors of Italian Origin

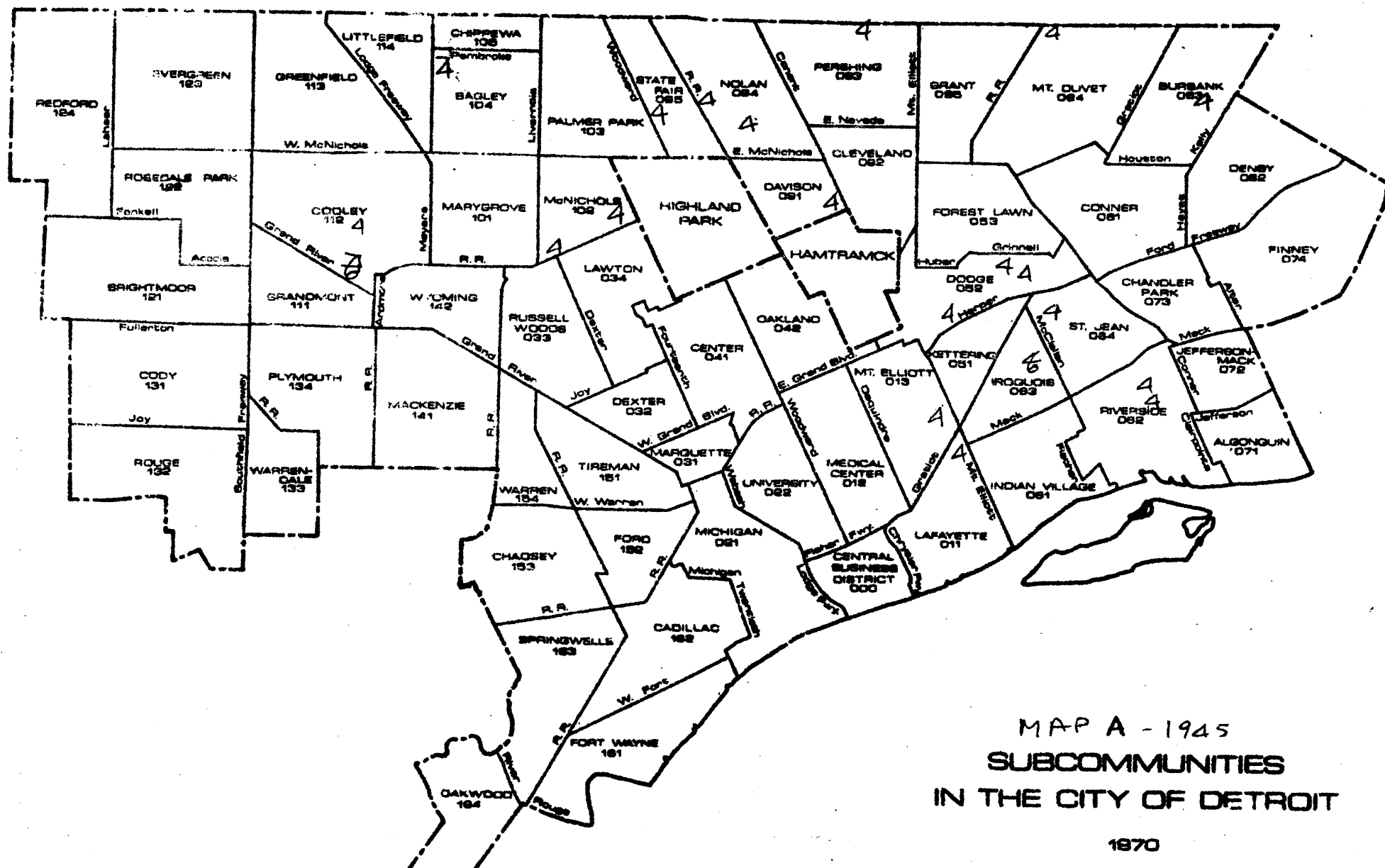
Graphic Synthesis of Life and Family Histories

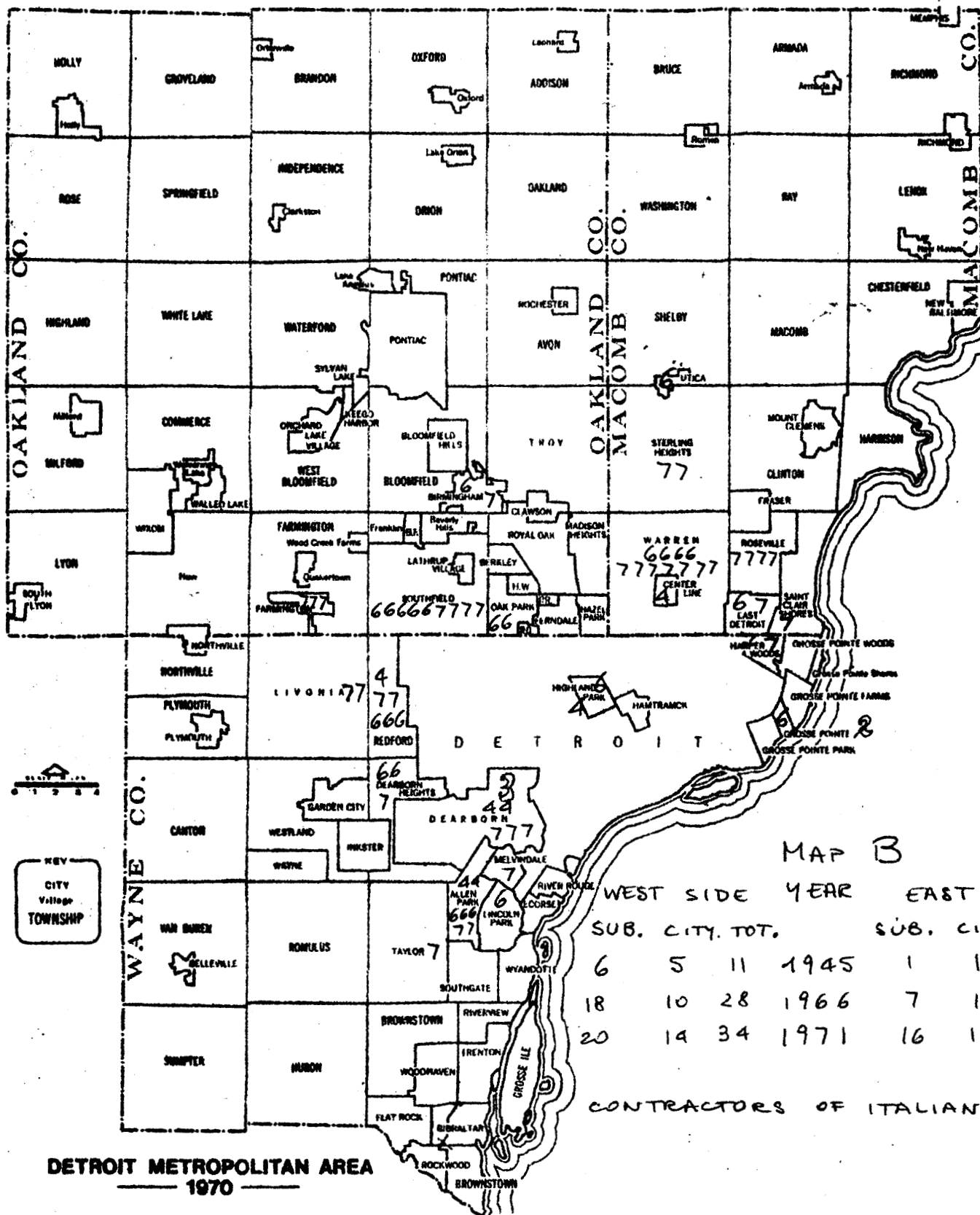




MAP A - 1926 - 36

SUBCOMMUNITIES IN THE CITY OF DETROIT

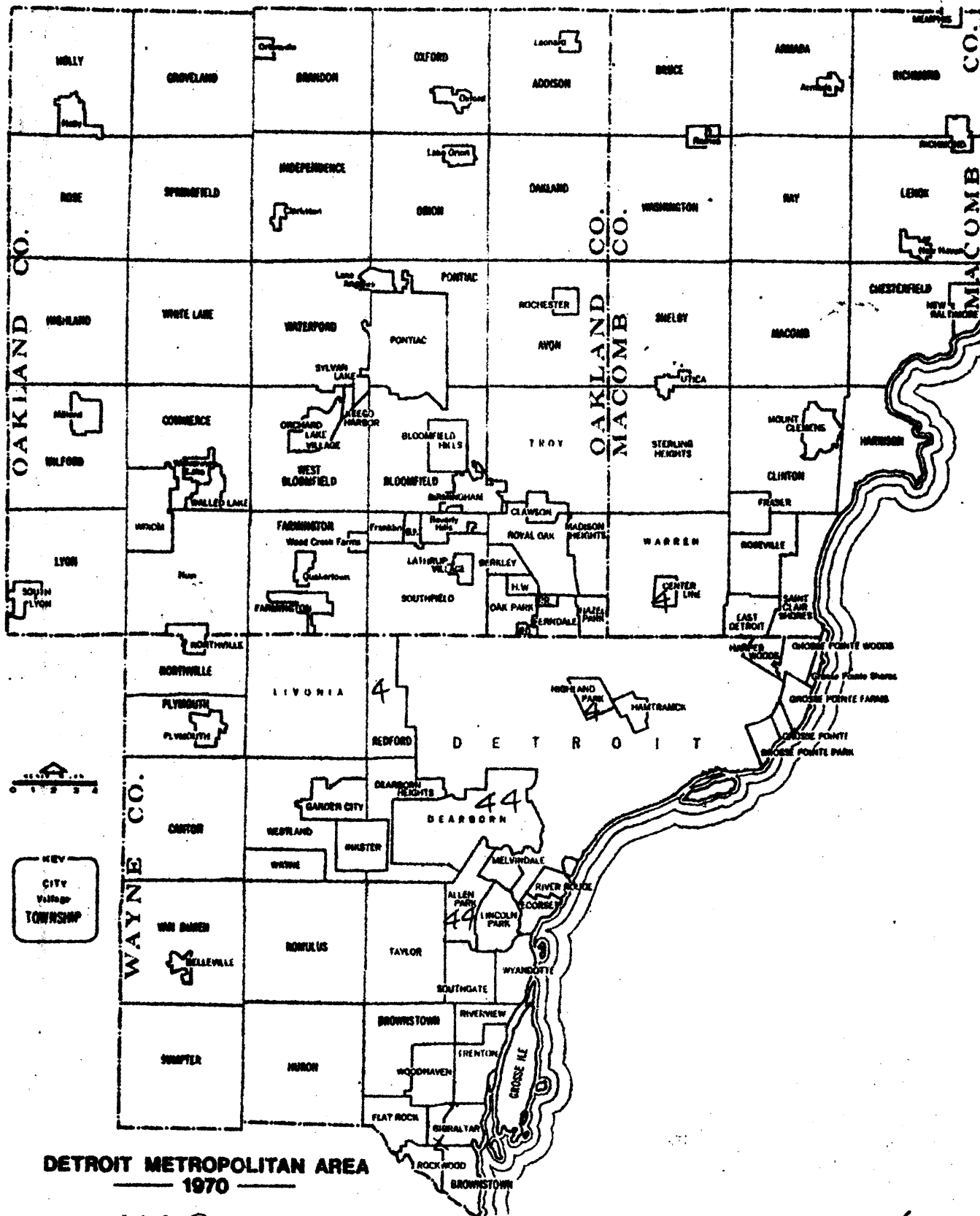


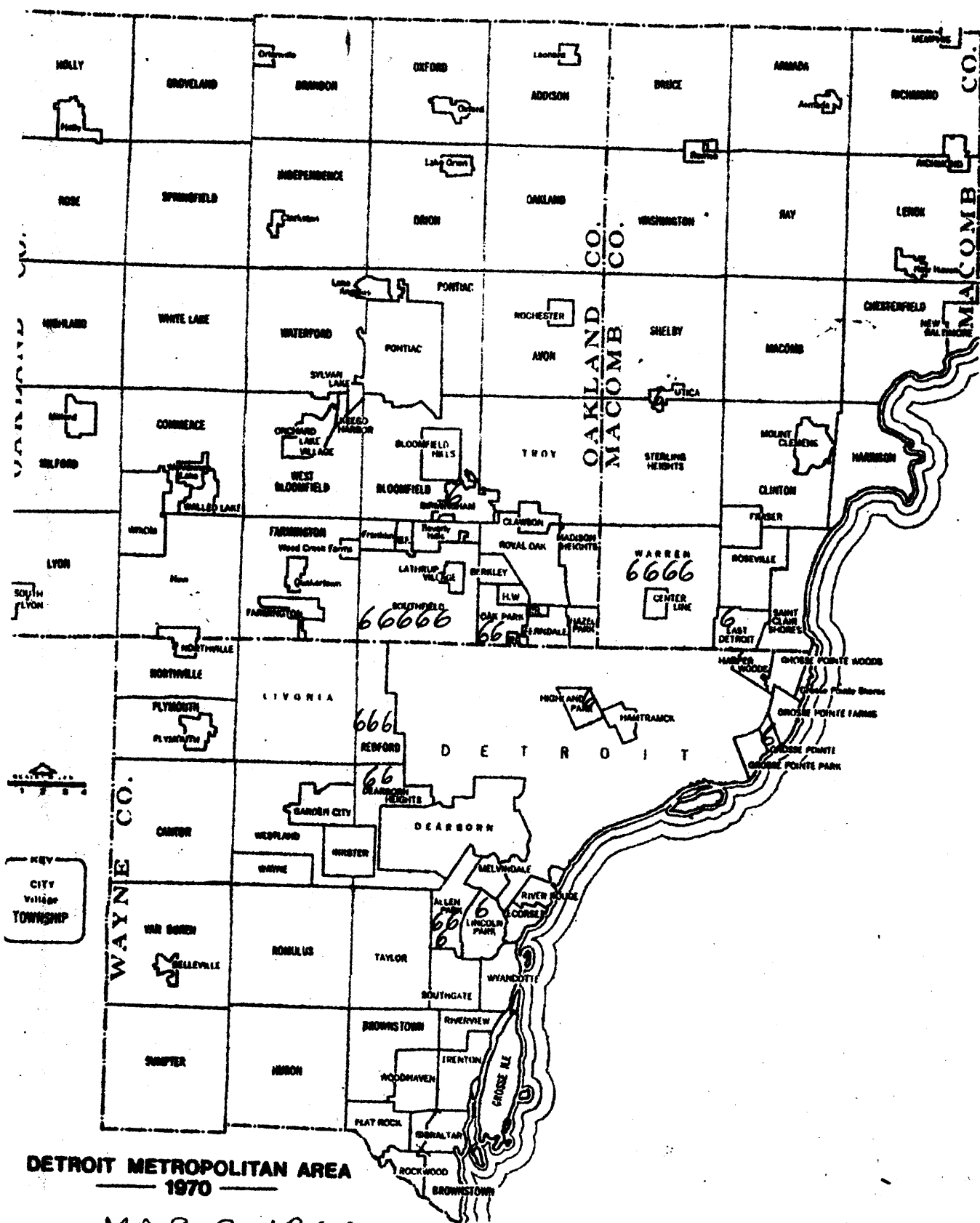


MAP B

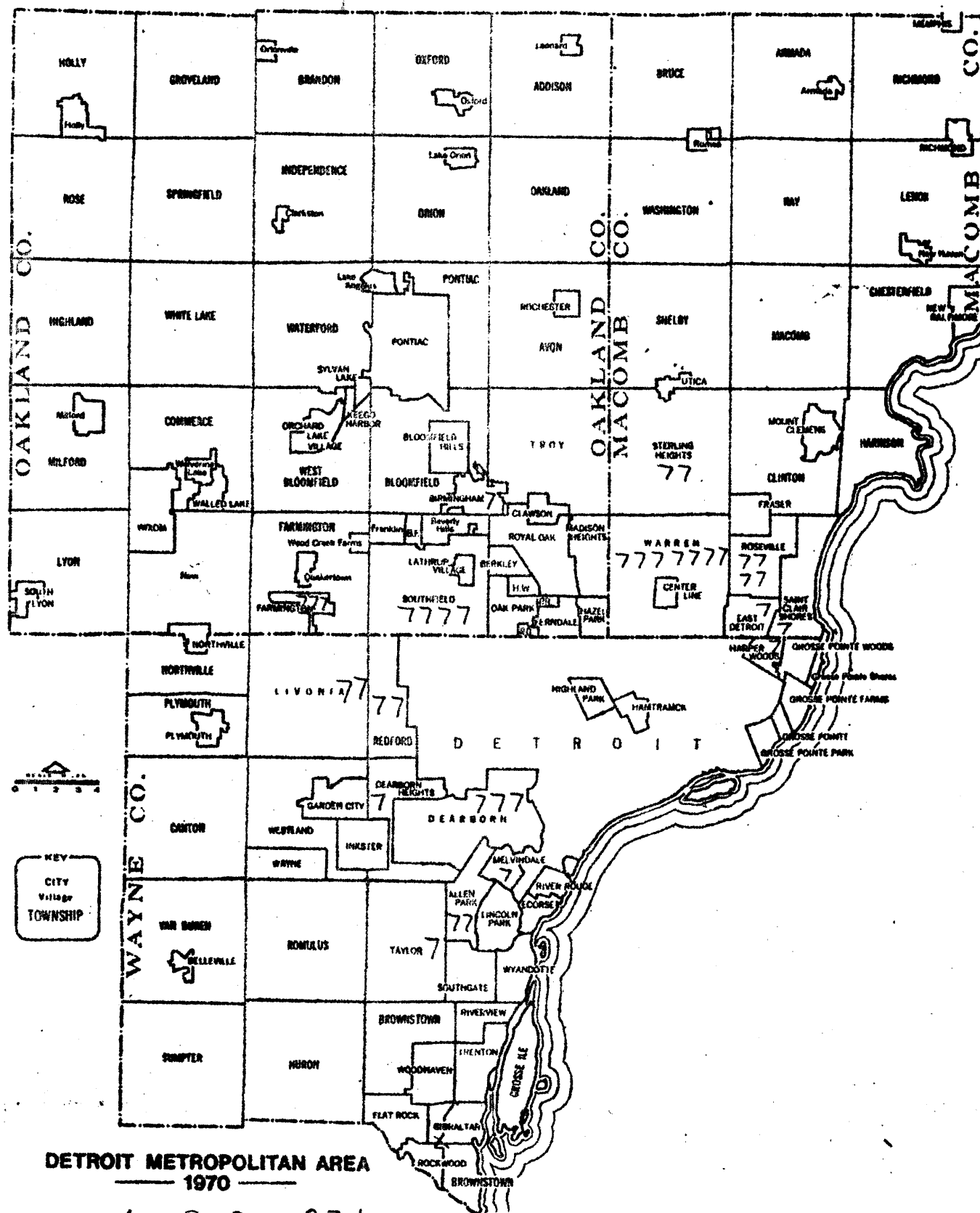
WEST SIDE YEAR				EAST SIDE		
SUB. CITY TOT.				SUB. CITY TOT.		
6	5	11	1945	1	16	17
18	10	28	1966	7	18	25
20	14	34	1971	16	12	28

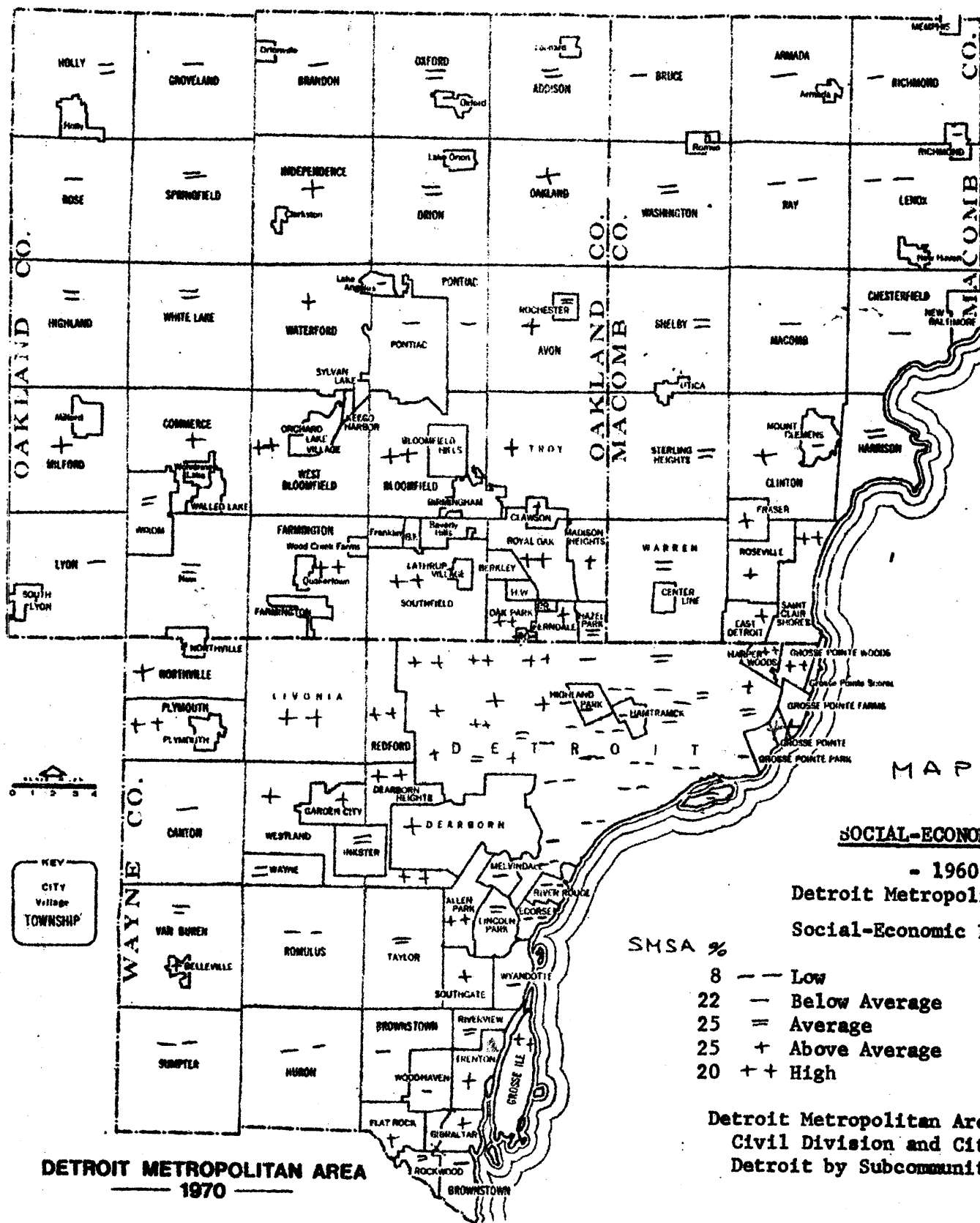
CONTRACTORS OF ITALIAN ORIGIN





MAP B-1966





SOCIAL-ECONOMIC LEVEL

- 1960 -

Detroit Metropolitan Area

Social-Economic Level

SMSA %

CITY %

8	Low	34
22	Below Average	18
25	Average	18
25	Above Average	14
20	High	16

Detroit Metropolitan Area by
Civil Division and City of
Detroit by Subcommunity

Sample of Addresses of Contractors of Italian Origin
East Side - Suburbs and Detroit

37436 E. Elmont
Sterling Heights, Mich. 48077

2582 Otter
Warren, Mich. 48092

24879 Masch
Marren, Mich. 48091

29257 Schoenherr
Warren, Mich. 48093

3000 Ten Mile Road
Warren, Mich. 48091

28273 Groesbeck Highway
Roseville, Mich. 48066

26829 Parkington
Roseville, Mich. 48066

28721 Utica
Roseville, Mich. 48066

15290 Ego
East Detroit, Mich. 48021

18566 Eastwood
Harper Woods, Mich.

13646 Eastwood
Detroit, Mich. 48205

13456 Hazelridge
Detroit, Mich. 48205

10901 Harper
Detroit, Mich. 48213

11141 Harper
Detroit, Mich. 48213

12345 Elmdale
Detroit, Mich. 48213

5301 Audubon
Detroit, Mich. 48224

78860 Dwyer
Detroit, Mich. 48234

13271 St. Louis
Detroit, Mich.

15921 East Eight Mile
Detroit, Mich. 48021

Sample of Addresses of Contractors of Italian Origin
West Side - Suburbs and Detroit

31716 West Eight Mile
Farmington, Mich. 48024

29934 West Eight Mile
Farmington, Mich. 48024

13971 Hillcrest
Livonia, Mich. 48154

30105 West Eight Mile
Livonia, Mich. 48152

24801 Five Mile Road
Redford, Mich. 48239

7525 Schaefer
Dearborn, Mich. 48126

10826 West Warren
Dearborn, Mich.

8501 Brandt
Dearborn, Mich. 48126

19110 Allen Road
Melvindale, Mich. 48122

6525 Shenandoah
Allen Park, Mich.

24555 Melody Lane
Taylor, Mich. 48180

30370 Leemoor
Birmingham, Mich. 48010

28792 Sunset
Lathrup Village, Mich.

92131 Greenfield Road
Southfield, Mich.

P.O. Box 166
Southfield, Mich. 48075

24745 Kinsel
Southfield, Mich. 48075

17520 West 12 Mile Road
Southfield, Mich. 48075

11399 Woodbine
Detroit, Mich. 48239

6345 Lyndon
Detroit, Mich. 48238

18435 James Couzens
Detroit, Mich. 48235

17741 Pilgrim
Detroit, Mich. 48227

19939 Livernois
Detroit, Mich. 48221

248 S. Bayside
Detroit, Mich. 48217

5458 15th Street
Detroit, Mich. 48208

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF GEOGRAPHICAL AND OCCUPATIONAL
MOBILITY OF ITALIANS ACTIVE IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY
IN ROME, ITALY AND DETROIT, MICHIGAN

(All responses will be kept in strictest confidence)

Please complete the following with as much information as you have:

1. Where in Italy is your family from?

Town _____

Province _____

Region _____

2. What kind of work did they do there?

3. (a) Who, in your family, came first to America? When and Where?

Relationship (e.g., uncle,
grandfather, etc.)

Year

Place of
Immigration

1.

2.

- (b) Who came after? When? Where?

Relationship

Year

City - State

3.

4.

5.

4. For each of these, would you know the places of residence and the kinds of work (with years) they had in the United States?

Relative	Dates	Place	Work
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

About yourself:

5. (a) Place of birth: _____

Date of birth: _____

- (b) Please list the main places of residence and kinds of work (with years) that you had up to now:

From	Years	To	Place	Work
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

6. Have you any employees working in construction who are of Italian origin?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, about how many? _____

7. Would you know about them?

(a) Where are they from?

Town _____

Province _____

Region _____

(Don't know) _____

7. (b) What kinds of work did they do in Italy?

	FEW (Under 20%)	MANY (20% to 50%)	MOST (Over 50%)
Farm work			
Construction work			
Other (specify):			

Don't Know: _____

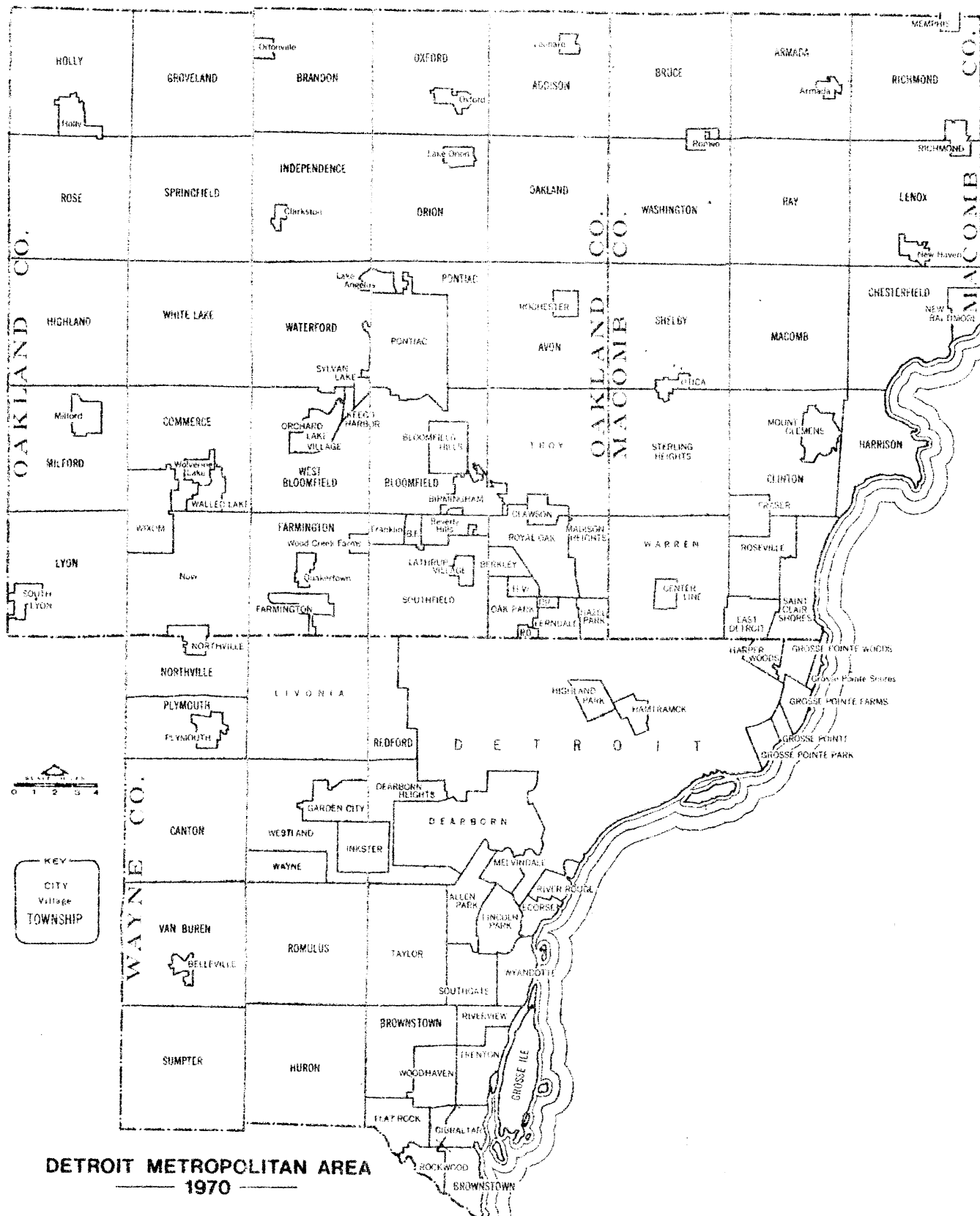
(c) What kinds of work, other than construction, have they done in the United States?

	FEW (Under 20%)	MANY (20% to 50%)	MOST (Over 50%)
Mining			
Factory			
Other (specify):			

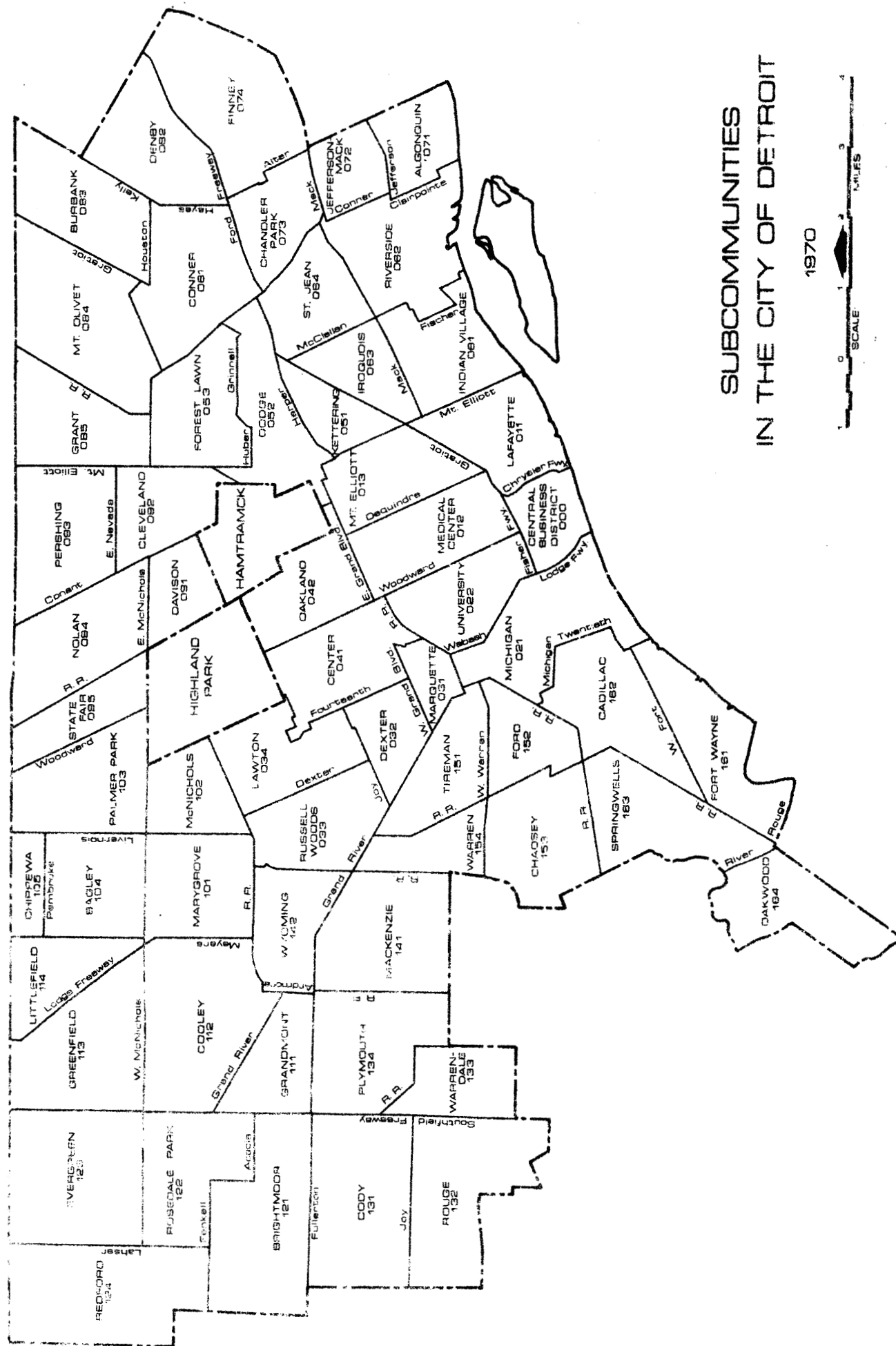
Don't Know: _____

(d) Where do they live now? (Mark with a ✓ on the attached maps)
Don't Know: _____

(e) Where did they live 10 years ago (about 1960)? (Mark on the maps with an X)
Don't Know: _____



DETROIT METROPOLITAN AREA
1970



SUBCOMMUNITIES IN THE CITY OF DETROIT

1970



8. (a) What is the age composition of your construction employees?

	FEW (under 20%)	MANY 20% to 50%	MOST (over 50%)
Under 20 years old			
20 to 30 years old			
30 to 50 years old			
Over 50 years old			

(b) Was this age composition about the same 10 years ago (about 1960) or different?

Same _____ Different _____

(c) If different, how?

9. (a) Have any of your former employees become construction contractors?

None _____ Few _____ Many _____ Most _____

About how many? _____

Don't know. _____

(b) What kinds of work did your other former employees go into?

	FEW (under 20%)	MANY (20% to 50%)	MOST (over 50%)
Stayed in construction work			
Went to work in factories			
Went to work in stores and offices			
Other (specify):			

Don't know _____

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal black ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

